

Colonialism and migration (Living in a multicultural society)

Possible answers and solutions

1. a) Summarise the passage. Do not write more than 200 words.

- Chanu and his wife Nazneen are sitting in the Azads' living room with the doctor and his wife.
- Chanu seems to enjoy being with the doctor, whereas Nazneen seems to feel uneasy and wants to leave.
- The doctor's daughter comes into the room and asks her parents for money to go to the pub.
- Dr Azad seems to be unwilling to give her money, so his wife does, and the girl leaves.
- An argument develops between Chanu, who considers the immigrant's life a tragic one, and Mrs Azad, who thinks integration is necessary.

1. b) Describe Dr Azad and his family as they are presented in this passage.

Dr Azad:

- He is an immigrant from Bangladesh, but has probably lived in Britain for quite a while since he went to medical school there.
- His beginnings were poor, but he survived with the help of his wife's family and has now reached a comfortable standard of living.
- He is fond of books and learning; his wife describes him as a "refined" (I.28) man, by which she ironically means that "the smell of real life offends him" (I.29).
- His reaction to his daughter's demand for money shows that he probably feels more attached to his original culture; on the whole he appears to be somewhat uneasy.

Mrs Azad:

- She has adopted a very Western lifestyle, recognising the need to assimilate into the society one lives in.
- She is aware of her cultural origin, but enjoys the freedom of life in Britain.
- She is very pragmatic and straightforward in her views and has obviously brought up her daughter in the same way.

The daughter:

- She speaks English with her parents, wears short skirts, chews gum and goes to the pub.
- She has a completely westernised way of life, no different from any British teenager.
- She is probably supported in leading this kind of life by her mother, whereas her father, who is more attached to his Muslim Bangladeshi origin, looks at her with unease.

2. a) "This is the tragedy of our lives. To be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy." (II.16–17) Analyse Chanu's view of the immigrant's life.

- Chanu makes his remark after the daughter has left the room to go to the pub; he has probably noticed the girl's appearance and Dr Azad's bad feelings about her behaviour.
- To him the girl becomes an example of the loss of one's cultural and religious origins; she is one of the children "who don't know what their identity is" (II.40–41).
- To Chanu the tragedy of the immigrant's life is "the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage" (II.39–40); these two aspects conflict and cannot be resolved. This determines the whole life of the immigrant.

Task 1 a) asks you to write a summary and therefore clearly aims at the contents of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 1*).

Keeping your summary short and focusing on the main points is important, but it can be tricky: You might have to guess some of the information you need in a fictional text. However, leave out your own opinion and interpretation. You will be asked to do this later on.

Task 1 b) aims at *Anforderungsbereich 1*, but also at *Anforderungsbereich 2*.

Describe means you are to give an accurate account of the family. In trying to do this, you will find that some of the information is not explicitly expressed but can be guessed from the text.

If you are additionally asked to identify the means employed by the author (explicit and implicit characterisation) the task clearly aims at *Anforderungsbereich 2*.

Analyse means you are to describe and explain in detail. So **task 2 a)** clearly aims at *Anforderungsbereich 2*.

What causes Chanu to make this remark in the first place? Also, at the end he still uses the word "tragedy". Why?

- Even financial and material success, such as Dr Azad enjoys, cannot make up for the tragedy, the loss of one's cultural roots.
- Even after being contradicted by Mrs Azad, Chanu seems to insist on his view: This tragedy is something highly individual; even if not every immigrant is aware of it all the time and to the same extent, it is there as a determining factor of his or her existence.

2. b) Explain Mrs Azad's refusal to accept Chanu's view.

- Mrs Azad is still very conscious of her cultural roots in Bangladesh, but she thinks that assimilation into the Western society in which one lives is an absolute necessity.
- She sees her own and her husband's progress from poverty to relative wealth as a success story.
- Her viewpoint is very pragmatic; she clearly appreciates the freedom Western society offers her as a woman: "But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I'm just one of them" (1.54).
- She sees no perspective in keeping the women away from social life and from learning English (here she may be thinking of Nazneen).
- In her opinion, people like Chanu cannot only be blamed for self-pity but also stand in the way of successful integration; they are responsible for their own alienation (growing sense of feeling separated from society) and the racism which they have to face in society.

3. Against the background of this passage, discuss the issues of racism and integration of Muslim immigrants into a Western society like the British one.

Depending on what you want to focus on and what conclusion you want to draw, your answer may take different forms. Here are some ideas:

On the one hand:

- Chanu is certainly right in pointing to the immigrant's dilemma in the way he does.
- In a multicultural society, it must be possible to keep one's cultural identity; assimilation (as in Mrs Azad's view) is not necessary.
- Racism of any kind (verbal, violent, open, hidden, latent) is hateful and must be fought against in all its forms.
- Racism is often caused by fear of what is foreign or different; getting to know individual people from other ethnic or religious groups helps against this feeling. This is why integration is so important.

On the other hand:

- Immigrants need a minimum of willingness to integrate.
- Is a multicultural society really practicable? How much tolerance can you afford with regard to a radical minority of immigrants who reject and even fight Western culture and values?

With **task 2 b)** you are still in *Anforderungsbereich 2*.

Explain means to describe and define the causes.

Task 3 aims at *Anforderungsbereich 3*.

Discuss means you have to give reasons for and against, in this case, the issues of racism and integration of Muslim immigrants into a Western society. The text offers you two contradictory views in the examples of Chanu and Mrs Azad. If you think about them, you will find that neither of them is completely right or wrong.

It is a good idea to first collect aspects concerning racism, its causes and effects, and integration. What can you say from your own experience? A structure working along the lines of "on the one hand / on the other hand" may be helpful. Then try to support your view with evidence and arguments in such a way that you can make your point most effectively. Do not forget to write a proper conclusion.